

H.R. 3218 corrects previous inequities faced by our nation's brave veterans, and protects their future.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3218.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3218, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MILITARY RESIDENCY CHOICE ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 282) to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to authorize spouses of servicemembers to elect to use the same residences as the servicemembers.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 282

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Military Residency Choice Act".

SEC. 2. RESIDENCE OF SPOUSES OF SERVICEMEMBERS FOR TAX PURPOSES.

(a) RESIDENCE FOR TAX PURPOSES.—Section 511(a)(2) of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. 4001(a)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: "The spouse of a servicemember may elect to use the same residence for purposes of taxation as the servicemember regardless of the date on which the marriage of the spouse and the servicemember occurred."

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any return of State or local income tax filed for any taxable year beginning with the taxable year that includes the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. RESIDENCE OF SPOUSES OF SERVICEMEMBERS FOR VOTING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 705(b) of such Act is amended—

(1) by striking "State or local office" and all that follows through the period at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting "State or local office—"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

"(1) a person who is absent from a State because the person is accompanying the person's spouse who is absent from that same State in compliance with military or naval orders shall not, solely by reason of that absence—

"(A) be deemed to have lost a residence or domicile in that State, without regard to whether or not the person intends to return to that State;

"(B) be deemed to have acquired a residence or domicile in any other State; or

"(C) be deemed to have become a resident in or a resident of any other State; and

"(2) the spouse of a servicemember may elect to use the same residence as the servicemember regardless of the date on which the marriage of the spouse and the servicemember occurred."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 90 days after the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 282, the Military Residency Choice Act. The Military Residency Choice Act would change the way military spouses claim State residency by allowing a spouse to claim the same State of residence as their servicemember spouse, even if they have never physically lived in that State.

I want to commend Representatives STEFANIK and WITTMAN for their work on this bill, and I will allow them to describe it in greater detail in a moment.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 282, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 282. This is a commonsense bill. It has received bipartisan support as it moved through the committee. It simplifies the process for a spouse of a servicemember to choose and change their State of residency for tax and voting purposes.

The bill is about removing additional headaches from servicemembers' lives and doing right by them. There are enough issues being a member of the military and for spouses and family. We don't need to add more to it.

This is a smart piece of legislation. It does exactly what it says it is going to do, and I support and encourage all Members to join me in support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK), co-author of the bill and my colleague on the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, my legislation gives military spouses the

choice to establish the same State of residency as the servicemember, giving them the benefit of retaining the same State of residency for voting and tax purposes.

As the proud Representative of Fort Drum and the Navy site at Kesselring, which I visited just this past Friday, I have heard firsthand about the challenges that military families face, and I have the highest respect for the sacrifices these families make to help protect our Nation and safeguard our freedom.

Military families must relocate every few years due to their spouse's responsibility to meet the requirements within the military. They sacrifice a great deal during these relocations, uprooting their lives and disrupting their families, all while serving as the critical support system for their loved ones. This is often a difficult and challenging time, with the heaviest burden falling upon military spouses.

Current law allows Active-Duty servicemembers to maintain one State of legal residence for tax and voting purposes, even when servicemembers receive military orders requiring them to relocate, but this does not apply to the servicemember's spouse. Essentially, this loophole requires spouses to establish residency every time the servicemember receives a new assignment, adding undue stress and anxiety to military families already under the pressure of managing their relocation. This legislation fixes this inconsistency.

Military spouses serve, too, and this bill eliminates the daunting task of documenting multiple tax jurisdictions and helps reduce instances of military spousal unemployment.

Traveling across the north country in New York, I have listened to the sacrifices our military families make to keep our Nation safe. We have a duty to reduce these burdens they face.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I again urge Members to support this smart piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1530

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this commonsense legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 282.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

VA PROVIDER EQUITY ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1058) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the role of podiatrists in the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1058

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “VA Provider Equity Act”.

SEC. 2. ROLE OF PODIATRISTS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) INCLUSION AS PHYSICIAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 7413. Treatment of podiatrists; clinical oversight standards

“(a) PODIATRISTS.—Except as provided by subsection (b), a doctor of podiatric medicine who is appointed as a podiatrist under section 7401(1) of this title is eligible for any supervisory position in the Veterans Health Administration to the same degree that a physician appointed under such section is eligible for the position.

“(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF CLINICAL OVERSIGHT STANDARDS.—The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders, shall establish standards to ensure that specialists appointed in the Veterans Health Administration to supervisory positions do not provide direct clinical oversight for purposes of peer review or practice evaluation for providers of other clinical specialties.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7412 the following new item:

“7413. Treatment of podiatrists; clinical oversight standards.”.

(b) MODIFICATION AND CLARIFICATION OF PAY GRADE.—

(1) GRADE.—The list in section 7404(b) of such title is amended—

(A) by striking “PHYSICIAN AND DENTIST SCHEDULE” and inserting “PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON (MD/DO), PODIATRIC SURGEON (DPM), AND DENTIST AND ORAL SURGEON (DDS, DMD) SCHEDULE”;

(B) by striking, “Physician grade” and inserting “Physician and surgeon grade”; and

(C) by striking “PODIATRIST, CHIROPRACTOR, AND,” and inserting “CHIROPRACTOR AND”.

(2) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to a pay period of the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning on or after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF REDUCTION IN AMOUNT OF PENSION FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “September 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30, 2026”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1058, as amended, the VA Provider Equity Act. This legislation would recognize the professional contribution of hardworking podiatrists within the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system.

The VA standard for compensating podiatrists has not been updated in 41 years. In that time, education and training for podiatrists has been revolutionized.

As a result of the VA's failure to recognize and respond to advancements in podiatry practice, it has created significant disparities in pay and advancement opportunities for podiatrists practicing at the VA in comparison to their peers in the private sector.

Consequently, the VA struggles to recruit and retain experienced, qualified podiatrists—those we want caring for our veterans—at a time when veteran need for podiatry care is increasing.

This legislation would solve that problem by allowing VA podiatrists the opportunity to seek leadership opportunities at VA medical facilities and making podiatry pay equal to physician and dentist pay within the VA healthcare system.

I am grateful to my good friend, fellow veteran, and committee member, Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, for his leadership in recognizing what an important issue this is and being thoughtful and tenacious in pursuit of a solution to it.

I am proud to join Dr. WENSTRUP in fully supporting this legislation and urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1058, as amended. The VA Provider Equity Act is a commonsense solution to a really important problem that is plaguing the VHA—a shortage of healthcare providers.

This legislation would allow VHA to attract the talented and experienced podiatrists it needs to better treat conditions caused by lower extremity injuries.

By allowing podiatrists the opportunity to advance within the VHA while earning pay comparable to what private sector podiatrists earn, VHA can better attract and retain these providers.

I appreciate the gentleman from Ohio, Dr. WENSTRUP's, work highlighting this, educating all of us on the committee, and making sure that the treatments of podiatrists between VHA and the private sector industry is aligned.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this good piece of legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP). Colonel Wenstrup is a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1058, the VA Provider Equity Act, as amended, which would strengthen access to the comprehensive first-class healthcare that veterans deserve.

Podiatric care is one of the top needs at VA medical centers across the country. Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan report high rate of musculoskeletal ailments resulting from lower extremity injuries inflicted by improvised explosive devices.

Veterans of previous wars also experience higher instances of foot and ankle ailments caused by aging, diabetes, and service-connected disabilities. All of this leads to increased demand for podiatric care at the VHA.

However, VA struggles to recruit and retain podiatrists due to a disparity in pay and leadership opportunities in comparison to both podiatrists in the private sector and to other physicians employed by the VA.

This is because VA first established standards for podiatrists in 1976, and podiatric education, training, and practice have changed considerably since that time. Nonetheless, VA's outdated standards have remained unchanged. This has translated into increased wait times. As of 2015, 93 percent of new podiatry patients wait more than 15 days for an appointment, and podiatry is the fourth most referred-out surgical service to community care.

My bill, H.R. 1058, the VA Provider Equity Act, would make VA's doctors of podiatric medicine equal to doctors of osteopathy and medical doctors within VA in terms of pay and ensure that VA podiatrists are eligible for the same promotions and leadership opportunities as other VA physicians, which is consistent with the private sector.

This bill will make it easier for VA to recruit and retain the specialists our veterans so desperately need. In turn, this will result in better care for veterans and savings to the taxpayer, as a recent study from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found that podiatry services provided to diabetic patients could have saved between \$29 million and \$97 million in 2014, in the State of California alone.